



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
CRIS

Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies



Future Trends Series - GR:REEN Project

Title of the report

World Agriculture: Towards 2030/2050 – Interim Report - Prospects for Food, Nutrition, Agriculture and Major Commodity Groups

Area

Energy and Environment

Reporter

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

Type of the Reporter

International Organisation

Periodically updated?

Yes

First issued year

2003

Latest update

2006

Official website

www.fao.org

Language available

English

Short summary

In order to take on board more recent data and historical ones that have been revised, this interim report presents an update and an extension to 2050 of Chapter 2 and 3 of the FAO Study World Agriculture: Towards 2015/2030, an FAO Perspective, published in 2003. It presents the latest FAO assessment of long-term developments in world food, nutrition and agriculture.

Key trends

Food and nutrition

- The historical trend towards increased food consumption per capita as a world average and particularly in the developing countries will likely continue, but at slower rates than in the past. "The average of the developing countries, that rose from 2110 kcal/person/day 30 years ago to the present 2650 kcal, may rise further to 2960 kcal in the next 30 years and on to 3070 kcal by 2050."
- The developing countries as a whole would record significant reductions in the relative prevalence of undernourishment (percent of population affected). "However, these will not be translated into declines in the numbers undernourished because of population growth. Reduction in the absolute numbers is likely to be a slow process."

- The proportion of the population undernourished could be halved by 2015 – from 20.3 per cent in 1990/92 to 10.1 per cent in 2015 and on to 6.9 in 2030 and to 3.9 by 2050. It is noted that the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) aims not to halve the numbers undernourished, but rather to “halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger”. In this sense, the MDG goal may be achieved.

Aggregate agriculture and major commodity groups

- The future may see some drastic decline in the growth of aggregate world production. The slowdown reflects the lower population growth and the gradual attainment of medium-high levels of per capita consumption in a growing number of countries.
- The cereals sector is projected to increase to some 3 billion tonnes by 2050. “Net exports could increase in the future and, therefore, the traditional cereal exporters (North America, Australia, the EU and the developing exporters) would not have to produce the full surplus needed to cover this growing deficit.”
- Production and consumption of meat will be likely to experience a growth deceleration “compared with the high growth rates of the past, though the milk sector should accelerate, mainly because of growth in the developing countries demand”.
- Sugar sector has a strong potential for further growth in consumption. Depending on the evolution of petroleum prices, sugar cane use as feedstock for the production of biofuels may keep growing in several producing countries (or those that have the resource potential to become major producers). Already several countries have plans to do so. It is possible that this development would contribute to keeping the growth rate of world aggregate demand (for all uses) and production from declining in line with the deceleration in the demand for food uses.
- The growing imports of mainly cereals, livestock products, vegetable oils and sugar of many developing countries is blurring the traditional dichotomy developed (net importers) – developing (net exporters).

Suggestions

- The diet transitions required to raise per capita food consumption to 3000kcal/person/day often imply changes towards energy-dense diets high in fat, particularly saturated fat, sugar and salt and low in unrefined carbohydrates. This often leads to an increase in diet-related chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). These countries need to focus their attention on the “double burden of malnutrition, resulting in novel challenges and strains in their health systems”.
- The slowdown in the growth of world agriculture may be mitigated if the use of crop biomass for biofuels were to be further increased and consolidated. Were this to happen, the implications for agriculture and development could be significant for countries with abundant land and climate resources that are suitable for the feedstock crops.

Methodology

Research from secondary sources

Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

- Bruinsma J., (ed.) (2003), World Agriculture: Towards 2015/30, an FAO Perspective, London: Earthscan and Rome: FAO.